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SUBJECT: SYG BAN BRIEFS ON AU SUMMIT, IRAQ, GAZA,  
AFGHANISTAN

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Secretary-General Ban briefed the Security Council on his recent travels in February 9 consultations. Ban recounted his personal intervention on the Muhajeria crisis in Darfur, described a long list of challenges in Afghanistan and relayed a new sense of optimism in Iraq in the wake of regional elections. He briefed the Council on plans for inquiries into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto and attacks on UN facilities in Gaza, and described Hamas's interference with delivery of humanitarian aid in Gaza. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon addressed a closed session of the Security Council on the afternoon of February 9 to brief on the outcome of his recent trip to Madrid, Davos, Addis Ababa, South Asia and Iraq. Ban began by telling the Council of his commitment to improving food security, as discussed in a high-level meeting in Madrid, and by stressing that intergovernmental negotiations on climate change required "political direction and impetus" at a very senior level.

AU Summit  
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¶3. (SBU) Somalia - Ban welcomed the election of Sheikh Sharif Sheikh Ahmed as president of Somalia and told Council members that money for Somali security forces was urgently needed, as was the return of the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to Mogadishu. Ban stated the UN's willingness to reinforce the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) and announced that African states are ready to deploy reinforcements to the force "in the very near future." He told the Council that General Assembly approval would be needed before the UN could act to reinforce AMISOM.

¶4. (SBU) Sudan - Ban reported extensive discussions on Sudan, telling the Council that his public and private intervention with the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudanese government preceded the JEM's withdrawal from Muhajeria. Ban recounted telling Sudanese President Bashir that UN personnel should be protected in the event of an International Criminal Court (ICC) issuance of an arrest warrant for Bashir: Bashir agreed. Ban also briefed on Joint Chief Mediator Bassole's efforts to convene talks between Sudan and the JEM in Qatar, and said that he hoped such talks could lead to a framework agreement. Many Council members praised UNAMID's decision to protect vulnerable civilian populations by remaining in Muhajeria despite strong pressure from the Sudanese government to withdraw. The UK stressed that the Council should remain committed to the peace process even if an ICC

warrant is issued, while Burkina Faso asked the SYG to report on possible complications that could arise from an ICC decision. China said that an arrest warrant would not help the situation and hoped that AU representatives would have an opportunity to brief the Council on the AU's position in the near future. France asked if the AU had provided assurances with regard to respect for UNAMID and international staff in Sudan in the case that an arrest warrant is issued.

15. (SBU) DRC - The SYG described a "dramatic turn for the better" in Eastern DRC as a result of improved cooperation between DRC and its neighbors and said that he was considering a late February visit to DRC, including a stop in Goma. He said that he would ask Special Envoy Obasanjo to continue to work with regional leaders to maintain momentum in the meantime.

16. (SBU) Zimbabwe - Ban welcomed the MDC's decision to join a unity government, but expressed skepticism that the move would lead to "real power sharing." President Mugabe declined a Ban request to release opposition prisoners, he said, but agreed that the unity government should allow full access to international aid organizations. Ban said that he was dispatching UN A/SYG Haile Menkerios to the new government's inauguration on February 13, and that he would review UN agencies' posture on the ground after the new government was sworn in. Several Council members welcomed the unity government announcement, while the UK said that its performance would have to be closely monitored.

17. (SBU) Other issues - Ban said that A/SYG Menkerios was currently in Madagascar at his request, meeting with the president and mayor and attempting to defuse tensions through the UN's good offices. The SYG reported that AU leaders were

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concerned about the situation in Madagascar, and that they spoke out in favor of a return to constitutional order in Mauritania and Guinea. Ban said that the UN would continue to work for a return to constitutional legality in Mauritania and Guinea through the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA).

Afghanistan/Pakistan  
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18. (SBU) Ban reported that the Afghan government seemed to be on the defensive during his visit, particularly with regard to the security situation and President Karzai's decision to delay the date of presidential elections from May to August 2009. In their conversations, Karzai told Ban that he was committed to democracy and wants to ensure a legitimate transition: Ban answered that any transitional arrangement after the constitutional expiration of Karzai's term in May must be based on a broad political consensus. The Secretary-General described the Afghan government's hope to conclude an agreement with NATO and other international forces to cut down on the number of civilian casualties due to military operations. While sympathetic, Ban added that any reform to counter-terrorism strategy needed to be accompanied by reform within the Afghan government to increase capacity and tackle drug-related corruption. Ban emphasized UNAMA's commitment to improving coordination of international efforts in Afghanistan. Despite daunting security challenges, UNAMA will expand its footprint from 18 to 23 offices in 2009, he said. China strongly supported the SYG's thoughts on Afghanistan, and said that the international community should focus on stabilization, civilian protection and reconstruction. Russia welcomed the Afghan government's initiative on civilian casualties.

19. (SBU) Ban emphasized that terrorism in South Asia could not be eliminated without improved regional cooperation, particularly between Afghanistan and Pakistan. He told Council members that Pakistani President Zardari and PM Gilani had described Pakistan as a major victim of terror. They stressed to him Pakistan's commitment to cooperate with

Afghanistan and to conclude a quick investigation into Pakistani links to the Mumbai terror attacks of November 2008. Ban said that Pakistani leaders also welcomed his announcement of a UN inquiry into the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, and promised full cooperation. He said that the inquiry expected to release its findings within six months.

India/Sri Lanka  
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¶10. (SBU) The SYG said that while in India to press a global warming agenda, he commended the Indian government for its restraint in the wake of recent terrorist attacks. Ban reported that Indian leaders were open to rapprochement with Pakistan but insisted on full Pakistani cooperation with India's investigation of the Mumbai attacks. Ban said that, while in India, he called Sri Lankan President Rajapaksa to register his concern over reports of high civilian casualties in the government's offensive against the LTTE rebels. The SYG was disappointed with Rajapaksa's denial that many civilians had suffered casualties, but said that efforts were ongoing to negotiate safe passage for civilians from rebel-held to government-held areas.

Iraq  
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¶11. (SBU) Ban delivered a nearly glowing report of his visit to Iraq, where he encountered a "new optimism and confidence" among Iraqi leaders. He praised UNAMI's work in ensuring that Iraqi authorities were fully prepared, saying that UNAMI is now "fully justified." If prevailing security trends continue, he said, the UN will continue to relocate its personnel from Amman to Baghdad. At the request of the Iraqi government, he relayed to Council members the Iraqis' strong desire that sanctions against Iraq be reviewed.

Gaza  
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¶12. (SBU) Ban laid out a four-pronged Gaza agenda: consolidating the ceasefire, expediting relief, promoting Palestinian unity and reinvigorating the peace process. He

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threw his support behind the Cairo relief conference planned for March 2, but declared his "dismay" at Hamas's seizure of UN goods, which he described as "totally unacceptable." He said that Hamas must return the goods and provide assurances that such seizures will not be repeated, but that Israel must also act to facilitate free humanitarian access and open checkpoints. Ban said that the UN would review its internal measures to prevent diversion and ensure that donated aid reached its intended recipients. He also announced his intention to establish a Board of Inquiry into damage to UN facilities. The Board will be headed by Ian Martin (outgoing SRSG and head of the UN Mission in Nepal), will have military experts on staff and is expected to issue its report within a month. Ban said that terms of reference for the Board were not yet complete, but that they would be shared with Security Council members when ready. Libya prepared a draft Presidential Statement welcoming the SYG's initiative to establish the Board and seeking a briefing by the Board on its findings. Russia also welcomed the Board. France welcomed the SYG's "resolute stance on stolen aid."

U.S. statement  
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¶13. (SBU) Ambassador Rice welcomed the Secretary-General's comprehensive report and active diplomacy -- in particular his visit and support to Iraq after the provincial elections and his leadership on Afghanistan. She welcomed the SYG's strong and balanced statement on Darfur and praised UNAMID's determination in remaining in Muzaheria. On Gaza, she

expressed the U.S.'s grave concern over Hamas's confiscation of humanitarian assistance.

Rice